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LESSONS FROM THE FLOOD RELIEF WORK

BY MARY E. GLADWIN, R.N.

THE recent work of the Red Cross nurses in Ohio has shown clearly the need of a much larger enrolment. In order to send 200 nurses into the field on the first call, it is necessary to have at least 600 enrolled. More than 200 were employed in doing relief work in Ohio after the flood. The semi-annual report of the Ohio Red Cross Nursing Service for October, 1912, showed a total of 160 nurses enrolled in this state. The Ohio State Association of Graduate Nurses has a membership of 713. It is true that the Ohio floods were most unusual and we hope never to see their like again, but it is for the unusual and most unexpected happenings that an emergency service must be ready, if it would reach its highest point of efficiency. It is possible to have just such a heavy rainfall another year, and if one-third of the things whispered about the great Ohio reservoirs are true, some one of them may "let go" after any prolonged period of wet weather and high water. Shall we be ready if a call comes next year? Are we preparing to pay our debt and to go forth to help another state if the need arises? Why should it be necessary to enroll nurses after the emergency has come? Are the older women and the women holding important positions setting the right example?

We rejoice over the broadening of women's lives and the increased opportunities for service which are coming to us. We look forward eagerly to a more active participation in civic and national affairs. Meanwhile, many of us are neglecting an opportunity to prepare for work which may come to us at any time. Our pride in our state and our country has been deeply touched by recent events in Ohio, and something nobler than pride has been stirred by the desolation and suffering upon which we have looked. Shall we not prepare in every possible way for what the future may hold? Dayton has raised \$2,100,000 to prevent another flood, men mortgaging their homes and making great sacrifices for the sake of the future. Shall we bury our one talent, or shall we do the simple duty which lies close at hand and have 8000 enrolled Red Cross nurses by next March?

One could not go through the weeks of work in Dayton without realizing as never before the value of definite teaching and preparation for such emergencies. The duties of local and state committees appear in quite a different light. The experience gained should make us all eager

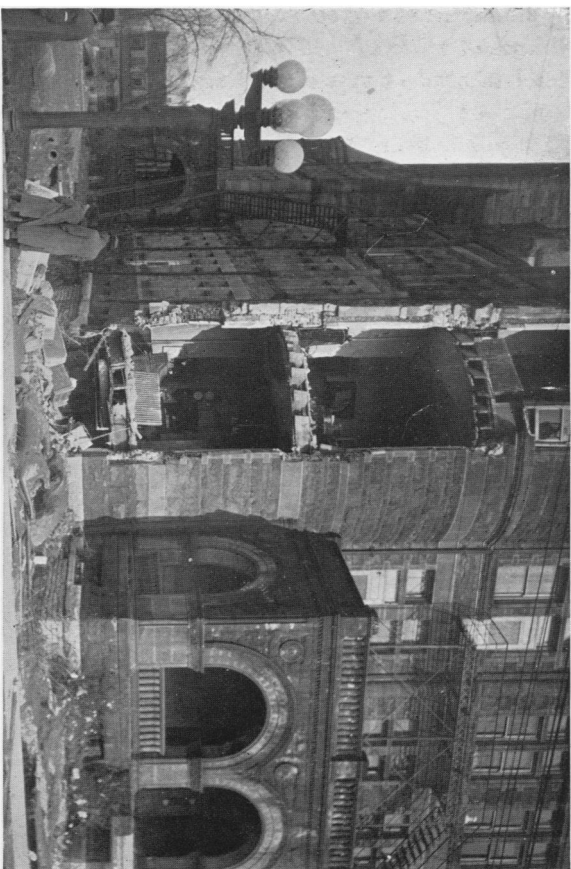
students of disasters and their relief. The Japanese taught us the value of forehandedness, that success means consistent and painstaking attention to details. The number of details for the study and thought of the various committees is very great. For example, we need to impress upon the members of all committees and upon the individual nurses that any one of them who is physically below par, who has any latent trouble which prolonged hard work or exposure may make active, should not let any generous impulse tempt her to respond to a Red Cross call.

The matter of clothes, as clothes have a fashion of doing, provokes endless discussion. In planning of uniforms, it is well to remember that it was two weeks before we could get any washing done and then only in small quantities. With laundry work and trunks out of the question, the value of a short dark skirt that can be worn constantly in rain and mud is apparent. Aprons, for the same reasons, are impossible, but there must be several dark uniforms for wear in hospitals and relief stations. The cold in Dayton was intense, seeming to penetrate to the marrow of one's bones. It being impossible to carry several weights of underwear on account of its bulk and its weight, sufficient warmth can be obtained by wearing heavy grey sweaters and tights of wool or silk. Dark bloomers are much to be commended, as they do away with just so much wet material around one's ankles. Much of our work would have been impossible without rubber boots. They are, however, a serious impediment to one's progress when heavy or ill-fitting, and should be chosen carefully as a part of each nurse's equipment.

The necessity of having two pairs of glasses, if one is helpless without them, is obvious. A small pocket case of instruments is invaluable. Many Dayton physicians had lost their entire stock, and it was difficult to obtain even a pair of scissors. Many of the nurses were without thermometers and hypodermics. Fortunately, the Cleveland Visiting Nurse Association sent down an extra supply and the Chicago visiting nurse bags were invaluable. A small alcohol lamp of the sort which is packed in the water container is of great use.

We are hoping for an official brassard, something which may be washed in a bowl with the certainty that the red will not "run." If the words Nursing Service were printed on the brassard, it would distinguish the nurses from the great number of people who find it an advantage to wear one on such occasions.

The work in Dayton was notable for several reasons, chiefly, perhaps, because with it came an official recognition of the value of the nurse in teaching the principles of hygiene and sanitation to the people and in the prevention of disease. A nurse who had spent the greater part of a



WRECK OF A SUBSTANTIAL BUILDING, DAYTON, OHIO.



A FLOODED PORTION OF DAYTON.

morning in instructing a family as to the necessity of a trench in their back yard and had then superintended its digging, when asked, "Do you consider *that* nursing?" replied unhesitatingly, "Nursing of the best sort. My morning's work may prevent an epidemic of typhoid." The nurses themselves little realized the effect of their stay in the city. We have been told on high authority that probably our work averted an epidemic. We know that the people were afraid to see us go, the presence of such a large body of trained workers giving them a feeling of confidence and security. The work of an occasional individual may have seemed small to her, but that is because she did not see it as part of a great whole. In that case she needs to remember the story of the relationship of the nail, the shoe, the horse, the rider, and the kingdom.

The great lesson is, then, that of being ready. We must have enrolled nurses in large numbers. Numbers are, however, not sufficient. Each local committee should devise a method whereby special study of disasters and their relief may be made as a preparation for the future. We need lectures which shall be not merely spectacular accounts of flood and fire, but which shall present careful studies of the application of the principles of relief. Let us study to make the experience gained in Ohio count for as much as possible in any future work we may do.

THE WORK OF THE CINCINNATI LOCAL RED CROSS NURSING SERVICE COMMITTEE.

BY MARY HAMER GREENWOOD, R.N.
Chairman of the Committee.

A MEETING of all the enrolled Red Cross nurses of Cincinnati had been called for the afternoon of Tuesday, March 25, 1913. This meeting was to inaugurate the recent opening of the Red Cross headquarters at 220 W. Seventh Street and to bring together for better co-operation and understanding of the Red Cross work the nurses of the local nursing service. Fourteen nurses, of the total enrolment of 36, were present and the Local Chapter was represented by the secretary and treasurer, Annie Laws. The meeting was called to order by myself. Miss Laws was called from the meeting by an urgent telephone message, asking her what arrangements had been made by the Red Cross to send relief to Hamilton and Dayton, which were reported to have been overwhelmed by a disastrous flood early on the morning of Tuesday. This telephone message was received from the *Times Star*, a Cincinnati evening paper. This was our first intimation of the disaster. In a few minutes a tele-